

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY SOFIA

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 5721

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SUBJECT: BREZHNEV AND COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP

1. SUMMARY. WHILE THE RULING ORGANS OF THE CPSU OPERATE ON THE BASIS OF COLLECTIVE DECISION MAKING, BREZHNEV DESERVES PRAISE AS AN OUTSTANDING LEADER, ACCORDING TO F. PETRENKO IN PRAVDA APRIL 9. PETRENKO'S DEFENSIVE TONE CONCERNING PRAISE OF THE GENERAL SECRETARY SUGGESTS THAT REFERENCES TO THE POLITBURO, SECRETARIAT, AND COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP AT THE 25TH CONGRESS, WHICH ARE REPEATED IN PETRENKO'S ARTICLE, WERE CALCULATED PRIMARILY TO ANSWER CRITICS OF THE BUDDING "CULT OF PERSONALITY" OF LEONID IL'ICH, AND THUS MAY POSSIBLY SIGNAL UNHAPPINESS OVER BREZHNEV'S PREEMINENCE ON THE PART OF OTHERS IN THE CPSU'S LEADERSHIP. END SUMMARY.

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WM THE FIRST HALF OF PETRENKO'S LENGTHY ARTICLE, ENTITLED "QUESTIONS AND THEORY: THE CPSU VANGUARD OF THE WORKING CLASS, OF ALL PEOPLE," DEALS WITH THE PARTY'S LEADING ROLE IN SOVIET SOCIETY, PARTICULARLY IN THE ECONOMIC SPHERE. HE THEN DISCUSSES THE FUNCTIONING OF THE PARTY ITSELF, QUOTING FREQUENTLY FROM BREZHNEV'S REPORT TO THE 25TH CONGRESS. ACCORDING TO PETRENKO:

--"THE 25TH CONGRESS AGAIN EMPHASIZED THE NECESSITY FOR ALL LEVELS OF THE CPSU, ALL PARTY ORGANIZATIONS, FOR EACH COMMUNIST STRICTLY TO OBSERVE INTER-PARTY DEMOCRACY, DISCIPLINE, LENINIST NORMS OF PARTY LIFE AND PRINCIPLES OF PARTY LEADERSHIP".

--"A CHARACTERISTIC FEATURE OF THE CPSU IS THAT IN ALL SPHERES OF LIFE, AND AT ALL LEVELS OF PARTY LEADERSHIP, ITS ACTIVITY IS BASED ON THE PRINCIPLE OF COLLECTIVITY."

--THANKS TO THIS, THE PARTY'S COURSE IS NOT THE FRUIT OF "ANYONE'S SUBJECTIVE WISHES, BUT THE RESULT OF COLLEGIAL DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF PROBLEMS WHICH ARISE, THE EMBODIMENT OF THE COLLECTIVE THOUGHT AND WILL OF THE PARTY, OF ALL COMMUNISTS."

--"THE ELEVEN PLENUMS OF THE CC, 215 POLITBURO MEETINGS AND 205 SESSIONS OF THE SECRETARIAT BETWEEN THE 24TH AND 25TH CONGRESSES WERE INDEED PARTY COLLEGIUMS, AT WHICH VITAL INTERNAL AND FOREIGN POLICY PROBLEMS WERE CONCRETELY AND DEEPLY ANALYZED AND ALL MAJOR QUESTIONS OF THE LIFE OF THE PARTY AND THE COUNTRY WERE RESOLVED."

--BECAUSE COLLECTIVITY IS DEEPLY ROOTED IN SOVIET SOCIETY AND IN THE PARTY, "IT IS UNDERSTANDABLE THAT THE 25TH CONGRESS ONCE AGAIN NOTED THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DECISIONS OF THE 20TH CONGRESS, THE OCTOBER (1964) CC PLENUM, AND 23RD AND 24TH CPSU CONGRESSES FOR STRENGTHENING AND DEVELOPING LENINIST PRINCIPLES OF PARTY LEADERSHIP AND NORMS OF PARTY LIFE. THE PERSONAL CONTRIBUTION OF GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE CC LI BREZHNEV TO THIS, AS TO ALL ACTIVITIES OF THE CPSU, IS GREAT."

3. THEN, IN AN UNUSUAL TWIST, PETRENKO ARGUES THAT PERSONAL PRAISE ACCORDED BREZHNEV IS ENTIRELY COMPATIBLE WITH THE CONFIDENTIAL

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PRINCIPLE OF COLLECTIVITY. WHILE REJECTING THE CULT OF THE PERSONALITY AND SUBJECTIVISM, HE WRITES, MARXISM-LENINISM HAS ALWAYS RECOGNIZED THE ROLE PLAYED BY OUTSTANDING INDIVIDUALS. AND

-- "AMONG THE WORTHY POLITICAL FIGURES ADVANCED BY THE PARTY AND THE PEOPLE TO LEADERSHIP OF THE COUNTRY, COMRADE LI BREZHNEV ENJOYS PARTICULARLY LARGE AUTHORITY AND GENERAL RECOGNITION IN OUR COUNTRY

AS WELL AS THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE WORLD."

-- MANY DELEGATES AND FOREIGN GUESTS AT THE 25TH CONGRESS MENTIONED "THE OUTSTANDING ROLE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PERSONAL QUALITIES OF THE GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE CPSU CC IN FORMULATING AND CARRYING OUT THE LENINIST LINE WHICH HAS BROUGHT HUGE SUCCESSES IN COMMUNIST CONSTRUCTION AND ENSURING PEACE AND PROGRESS. AND JUST AS NOTEWORTHY FOR THE STYLE OF LEADERSHIP WHICH HAS BECOME ESTABLISHED, IN HIS CONCLUDING SPEECH COMRADE LI BREZHNEV, IN THE SPIRIT OF LENINIST TRADITIONS, SAID: 'HOWEVER, WE SHALL BE QUITE RIGHT IN REGARDING THE SUCCESSES ACHIEVED AS BEING THE RESULT OF COLLECTIVE WORK, OF THE JOINT EFFORTS OF THE PARTY'S GOVERNING BODIES AND OF ALL THE PARTY COMMITTEES AND ORGANIZATIONS.'"

4. PETRENKO CONCLUDES THAT THE PARTY'S PIVOTAL POSITION IN SOVIET SOCIETY REQUIRES INTERNAL PARTY DEMOCRACY AS WELL AS STRENGTHENED CONTROL AND VERIFICATION OF IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS AT ALL LEVELS. HE ALSO STRESSES THE IMPORTANCE OF CLOSE TIES BETWEEN THE PARTY AND THE PEOPLE INCLUDING OPENNESS OF PARTY WORK AND USE OF "ALL CHANNELS" TO STUDY THE NEEDS AND PROBLEMS OF SOVIET SOCIETY.

5. COMMENT: PETRENKO'S ARTICLE STRIKES US AS A DEFENSE OF THE PRAISE GIVEN BREZHNEV AT THE 25TH CONGRESS. IT LENDS CREDENCE TO A RUMOR, RECENTLY PICKED UP BY THE BRITISH EMBASSY FROM AN INFORMED SOVIET SOURCE, THAT PARTY MEMBERS IN SEVERAL INSTITUTES HAD WRITTEN LETTERS COMPLAINING OF A BUDDING CULT OF BREZHNEV. THE TENOR OF THESE LETTERS REPORTEDLY WAS THAT THE CPSU SUFFERED UNDER STALIN'S PERSONALITY CULT, THEN UNDER KHRUSCHEV'S "SUBJECTIVISM", AND THESE ERRORS SHOULD NOT BE REPEATED.

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YM PETRENKO'S UNUSUAL TREATMENT OF COLLECTIVITY AND BREZHNEV ALSO SUGGESTS THE BREZHNEV'S EMPHASIS AT THE CONGRESS UPON THE COLLECTIVE NATURE OF PARTY WORK MAY HAVE BEEN INTENDED PRIMARILY TO BALANCE THE ATTENTION HE PERSONALLY HAD BEEN ACCORDED IN THE SOVIET MEDIA PRECEDING THE CONGRESS. THIS, TAKEN TOGETHER WITH THE PETRENKO ARTICLE, IMPLIES AN AWARENESS, FROM AT LEAST THE TIME OF THE CONGRESS TO THE PRESENT, ON THE PART OF BREZHNEV AND HIS SUPPORTERS OF ACTUAL OR POTENTIAL CRITICISM WITHIN THE PARTY OVER HIS GROWING PREEMINENCE. THE TANTALIZING QUESTION IS WHETHER SENIOR MEMBERS OF THE LEADERSHIP ARE CRITICAL OF BREZHNEV'S TOLERATION OF -- IF NOT FONDNESS FOR -- PERSONAL ACCLAIM. IN ANY EVENT, OBEISANCE TO COLLECTIVITY MIGHT WELL STEM MORE FROM CONTROVERSY OVER BREZHNEV'S POSITION,

OCCASIONED BY THE PRAISE HEAPED ON HIM IN THE PRE-CONGRESS
AND CONGRESS PERIOD, THAN FROM AN AGREED POLITBURO POSITON
TO HIGHLIGHT "LENINIST NORMS" OF PARTY WORK.
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